

EUGENICS AND NATIONAL EFFICIENCY

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IN the cauldron of unrest that is seething in every land throughout our Planet there is one ingredient—national efficiency—which has not hitherto been the object of co-ordinated study. By national efficiency I mean the sum of spiritual, mental and material conditions, each of them affecting, whilst none alone determines, national destiny. Navies and Armies are neither better nor worse than the nations that produce them, for the efficiency of the fighting forces is the sum of the three factors just named, and these by their presence or their absence make or unmake the nation.

Recent events moving with great rapidity have turned the eyes of all Europe upon Turkey. We all know that the modern Turks are fine soldiers, but few of us realise that in point of national efficiency they excel most other nations. Although Turkey has been ranked among the dying nations and England nominally occupies the highest pedestal of civilisation, qualities are to be found among the Ottoman peasantry which are rare or wanting in the slums and the insanitary villages of Britain. The Ottoman soldier is unpaid, ragged, and neglected, but his arms are polished and clean and his heart is on fire for battle; his one desire is to conquer for his faith and his Sultan. To quote a brilliant writer in the *Dublin Review* :

“ Men who run 6ft. 2in. in height, with chest and thews in proportion, whose word is as good as their bond, who will suffer themselves to perform five years' compulsory service with the colours, who will pay without a murmur the most exorbitant taxes, who, if left to themselves, have no other ambition than to cultivate the soil in the most primitive fashion, but who, if told that the faith is in danger, will be prepared to march to Vienna at a moment's notice, who will give up house and home to afford a strange traveller a night's lodging, yet who on occasion will turn out with bludgeons

to suppress a Christian rising by killing and killing until none are left to kill—such people, I suggest, cannot be lightly passed by, and such are the modern Turks of Anatolia.”

Why are the efficiency factors I have named wanting amongst ourselves? Let us look beneath the surface. There is nothing in history like the British Empire. It was not the result of design, it sprang from the action of adventurers of English, Irish, and Scottish blood. These Empire Builders, and especially the English among them, were born under conditions without parallel on the face of the globe. The favouritism of Nature for Britain is exhibited in many ways. We inhabit a fertile breakwater 600 miles in length which blocks the western egress of all the races of Northern Europe and of Asia. From the Pacific Ocean to the Vosges Mountains no Russian, Finn, Swede, German, Dutchman, or Belgian, has access by water to the rest of the world without passing through the Straits of Dover, or traversing the North Sea. Our geo-political position is not only choice, it is the choicest of all.

Nature, not content with planting the British on the pick of the Planet, has endowed us in other ways, and by conferring permanent preference upon the inhabitants of these islands, like a fond and foolish godmother, has encouraged lethargy and indifference, the fruit of which we are garnering to-day.

Our coal and our iron are found side by side and both are near to water transport. It is calculated that every pound of metal worked into a German ship travels 400 miles before it is placed in position. The German conditions of ship-building, if they obtained in Britain, would necessitate the Tyne builders sending to Cornwall for their iron and to Portsmouth for their coal. Such favouritism in nature is apt to lull the average man into a false sense of security, but the luck of the British goes further owing to the benign influence of the Gulf Stream.

In Northern Europe colder winters and hotter summers than ours retard the industry and harass the agriculture of our rivals. The British atmosphere supplies, moreover, in Lancashire at all events, the precise degree of moisture which our cotton industry needs. Although every pound of Lancashire raw cotton is imported, not even the United States, Japan, or India

can compete on equal terms with the manufacturers and operatives of that county.

Lastly, the fact that Britain is an island has enabled us while maintaining a strong navy to engage in war when we liked, and to relinquish hostilities at pleasure, while escaping hitherto the compulsory military service imposed on the inhabitants of less fortunate lands.

On the other hand, cumulative good fortune in position, climate, wealth, and soil, while securing for us some conspicuous advantages has, unfortunately, rendered us as a nation impatient of organisation, of logic and of discipline. Compromise—*laissez-faire*—"go as you please"—together with a short-sighted humanitarianism, have left us with problems unsolved that have long since been settled by races subjected to greater pressure in the struggle for life. While boasting of the finest horses, sweet-peas, delphiniums, bull-dogs, and grass-fed beef in the world, we have hitherto left to chance the future of our own race.

It is a main purpose of the Eugenics Education Society to call public attention to this state of things, and to find a remedy. Part of this remedy is the Sterilisation of the Unfit, and on this, so far as it bears on national efficiency, I propose to say a few words. But who are the Unfit, and what is Sterilisation? Reasonable answers to these questions are necessary before action is possible: otherwise we may sterilise the fit. Who, then, are the unfit? Let me reply by an illustration.

In the days when Thuggee flourished, the Government of India, which holds the wolf by the ears, came to the conclusion that the Thug community was a section of the Indian Unfit, who, in the interests of Indian efficiency, must be sterilised. Thugs were hanged freely, but hanging did not cure Thuggee. When, however, the Indian Government, benevolently despotic, prevented Thugs from marrying, the particular method of strangling wayfarers by silken cords, which had previously baffled the best administrators India produced, became extinct. Thugs, being efficient assassins, were justly classed among the Unfit because their worship of Kali, the Goddess of Destruction, was contrary to public interest. In the Indian Government's treatment of Thugs we get a possible clue to the treatment of the

Unfit in England. Julius Cæsar himself, as an epileptic, would have come under the ban of Dr. Rentoul, of Liverpool, who defines epilepsy as one of the breeding-beds of mental degeneracy. When we come to think of it, Julius Cæsar, far from being an exception, is an example of the type which has done most for humanity. For the work of the world is mainly done by the irritable, sanguine, nervy, resolute people with great engine-driving power, not by those men and women whose physical machinery is perfect, and whose souls float in a perfect frame. That each one of us is in a measure *among the Unfit* is known to every human soul honest with itself. The question of unfitness, therefore, is one of degree, and the medical tyranny that would extirpate breeding-beds of mental degeneracy at the wholesale sacrifice of personal liberty is out of court, not because it is stupid, but because it is unpractical.

If, on the one hand, unfitness is a question of degree, on the other hand we must admit that some of the Unfit are also public enemies, so dangerous to the State as to justify extinction, segregation, or any treatment that enables the healthy majority to defend itself effectively against the attacks of the semi-insane. Murderers are "sterilised" by hanging, forgers are "sterilised" for terms of years; habitual criminals who return again and again to H.M. prisons are "sterilised" for long periods; the resumption of toxic fecundity being conditional only on re-entry to the life of the community and the existence of females willing to share their lives. The remarkable thing is that the State which sterilises murderers, and partly sterilises forgers, subsidizes insanity. Space prevents my citing more than a couple of examples. Two women, patients in one of our largest asylums, suffered on twelve occasions from mania after child-birth. Twelve times were they discharged from the asylum as cured. Twelve times was a baby born in the asylum soaked in the poison of pre-natal influence and doomed to hand down legacies of sorrow and torment to unborn generations. Could any method of conducting human affairs be more fatuous?

For my second example I am indebted to one of our greatest living specialists. It is even more striking than the first. In 1780, a marriage took place between a wealthy girl in whose

family there had been insanity and a healthy man in her own rank of life. This couple had three children, one of whom was an idiot, and one was normal. Neither of these children married. The third child, who was apparently normal, married and produced nine children, of whom the first was insane, the second, third, fourth, and fifth were either insane, suicides, or melancholiacs. Of the subsequent descendants no fewer than twenty were imbeciles, neurotic, religious maniacs, deaf, or otherwise abnormal. Seven more were doubtful, and twenty-five were normal.

In the case just quoted, the environment, clothing, housing, food, and general conditions were all along favourable, and yet the results were disastrous. Is it reasonable to suppose that the results would be better when the original parents were insane paupers?

Is there no way by which these disastrous sex-unions can be prevented and the black stream of misery that flows from them stemmed? I think there is. Surely the public can be got to entertain the conviction that English girls, in 1909, need at least as much protection against marriages with degenerates as Indian wayfarers did against the Thugs!

Travellers in the Mofussil, indeed, always stood an offchance of escape or of killing their man. English girls mating with men whose brains are tainted had better have perished by the bow-string of the Thug than consummate such a union. The answer to the question, therefore, what is the unfitness that justifies sterilisation is that the unfitness shall be of a kind that is as dangerous to the community as murder or forgery, and that the sanction for interference shall rest, as all sound laws rest, on the solid foundation of public policy.

It is noticeable that all writers on Sterilisation of the Unfit seem to assume that there is only one method of obtaining the desired end, and that method cannot be discussed, at all events in England. It is otherwise across the Atlantic. The State of Indiana has passed an Act for the sterilisation by the knife of confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles, and rapists, and has fixed the maximum fee of the medical experts consulted. If we are not ripe for a measure as drastic as that, is there no other way of

obtaining the desired end? I think there is more than one way without offending any reasonable susceptibilities. First, adult men and women who exhibit homicidal, perverted, sexual, or animal propensities dangerous to the public may justly be segregated and prevented from propagating their kind, for the same reason that a runaway railway engine is side-tracked and upset, or a derelict ship on an ocean highway sunk by the guns of a man-of-war as being a danger to navigation. Secondly, degeneration may in a large measure be stopped at its source and so sterilisation may be rendered unnecessary. Let me explain by a few simple facts. A census of the children born to parents living in Berkeley Square and to parents living in a slum where defective brains were the rule rather than the exception showed that the proportion of the Unfit in the slum, compared with the proportion in the Square, was as two and a half to one. From the figures given to the International Housing Congress by Mr. W. H. Lever, M.P., at Port Sunlight on August 9th, 1908, it appears that crime and disease disappear under favourable conditions as regards wages, employment, housing, food, fresh air, and recreations. Further, it seems beyond dispute that when the number of houses exceeds twelve to the acre, disease and death increase, weight and height grow less, and degeneration sets in.

The Port Sunlight and Bourneville administrations, especially the former, are no longer mere experiments. They prove, as far as anything can be proved in this life, that crime and ill-health are replaced by moral and physical efficiency under sound conditions of housing. Glasgow School Board measurements, taken of 74,000 school children, showed that both boys and girls living in a one-roomed family are two inches shorter than children in a two-roomed family, and that the two-roomed children are shorter than three-roomed children, and three-roomed children shorter than four-roomed children. All this sounds very obvious to those who study the subject even fragmentarily, but does it not point to the need for grappling with the race problem in the broadest spirit, and for concentrating national attention, charity, and resources on the improvement of the breed by levelling up?

But this is not all. A reform of our marriage laws is

imperatively called for, which will empower clergy and registrars to refuse to celebrate marriages where certain scheduled diseases exist in either of the parties, or where in the case of male minors there is evidence of inability to support a wife. Further, complete revision of our educational system is needed with the view, instead of decanting indigestible facts into brains unnourished by good red blood, of enforcing on boys and girls alike thorough physical (I might say military) training, and so creating a body of citizens not only fit to reproduce their kind, but to do their duty to themselves. Only by such measures as these, not by maudlin philanthropic sentiment, can we reach national efficiency.